3:Stannus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

845 one of Malenga's men died, after giving birth to quintuplets, some thirty years ago. Deformed children are buried alive. A large number of children is always hoped for and where
[165] polygamy is practised, some families are of considerable size, although the mortality among young children is very high. It is, of course, very difficult to state the child-bearing period among natives. It does not start so early as is commonly supposed, and I think the menopause is found within about the same limits as among Europeans.

761 *Death.* Natives of Nyasaland live to a good old age. That such is not the case I have found to be one of the many fallacious beliefs concerning natives which should be relegated
165 to the realm of exploded theories, as I have pointed out elsewhere.[1]

Death in old age is recognised as a natural event but apart from this, all sickness and
[184] death were formerly and are still to a large extent looked upon as the result of the machinations of some person, an idea which forms the outstanding feature in their belief in witchcraft, sasai.[2]

Here I shall mention the ordinary customs in the case of death. During the last hours
●763 of a mortal illness, a man is tended by his wife or wives; the head wife sits constantly supporting his head on her lap or against her breast. A woman is similarly tended by her mother, sisters, and friends. As unconsciousness sets in and the extremities become cold, they say, "His spirit has gone and only the heart remains alive."

The native does not like the idea of lingering on and a man on his death-bed will say to his sons, "Now watch me that I die quickly." He may take medicine to help him over that time or he may give his sons instructions as to what to do. Should a man linger unconscious for a long time, friends will ask his sons, "Did he give you any instructions?" If he has done so, the sons will then carry them out. This perhaps consists of bathing themselves in medicines left by their father, while they stand on the roof of his house. Some-
[825] times, the natives say of a lingering case, "Ah, perhaps he has eaten of a tortoise's heart!" knowing the phenomenon of the tortoise's heart and believing that by partaking of it, the same property can be conferred on the heart of a man.

764 When death is manifest, the body is covered with a cloth by a brother, a son, or some
[197] other person in attendance. The eyes are closed, the mouth shut, and at the present time, the body straightened out. This, however, is a recent practice copied from the Anyanja, Europeans, and Mohammedans.

764 *News* of the death must be sent to the *chief*, and a messenger goes to his village where
203 the *chief* and his people sit in the village open space. He carries a fowl in his hand. The present of a single fowl always denotes bad tidings. One of the chief's men, seeing the stranger approach with the single fowl, will jump up and take the bird. He is joined by the others and they go away to the cross-roads where they kill the fowl, pluck it, cook it and eat it. In the meantime, the messenger delivers his news to the *chief* who will produce from his house about eight yards of white calico; if the deceased has been a much respected

[1] Hugh S. Stannus, "The life-span of negroes", (*Lancet*, April 11, 1914, p. 1052). [2] Vide infra, p. 288.